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FROM AMBASSADOR

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [AE](#)  
SUBJECT: UAE - SCENESETTER FOR VISIT OF CJCS

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard Olson, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (C), (D)

¶1. (SBU) Admiral Mullen: we warmly welcome your visit to Abu Dhabi, and have requested an appointment with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MbZ), whom you last met on 9 September 2009 in Washington. We have also requested a meeting with your counterpart, Lieutenant General Hamad al-Thani al-Romaithi, Chief of Staff of the UAE Armed Forces, whom you last met on 8 October 2009 in Washington.

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The Relationship  
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¶2. (S/NF) The UAE is one of our closest partners in the Middle East and one of our most useful friends worldwide.

-- Al-Dhafra Air Force Base is the high altitude ISR hub for the AOR, and supports 50 percent of aerial refueling in the AOR.

-- Ports in Dubai and Fujairah are the logistics backbone for the U.S. Fifth. Jebel Ali (Dubai) is the most frequented USN liberty port after Norfolk.

-- Minhad Air Base is a critical hub for Coalition/ISAF partners in Afghanistan, including the Australians, Dutch, Canadians, Brits and Kiwis.

-- The UAE is a cash customer with FMS sales in excess of \$11 billion. Commercial sales have an equivalent value. An additional \$12 billion of FMS cases are in development with approximately the same volume of commercial sales in the works.

-- The UAE recently purchased nine Patriot batteries, and expects to move forward on the purchase of THAAD as the first non US customer.

-- The UAE currently commands CJTF-152 (Arabian Gulf) and maintains an active exercise schedule with U.S. (Red Flag) and other multi-lateral partners.

-- The UAE recently hosted an AFCENT survey team to consider U.S. access to Liwa (Safran) Air Base in support of contingency operations.

-- Additionally, the UAE is considering hosting the Regional Integrated Air and Missile Defense Center of Excellence.

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## Iran - the Primordial Concern

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¶3. (S) The UAE leadership sees Iran as its primary external threat, and one that is existential in nature. Like much of the international community, the UAE finds the idea of an Iran with nuclear weapons unacceptable and thinks this eventuality would lead to a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. At least as worrying to MbZ are Iran's aspirations for regional hegemony by support for terrorist proxies (Hizballah, HAMAS, possibly underground organizations in the Arab Gulf countries). MbZ is skeptical that Iran can be convinced to end its nuclear weapons program, and is not convinced that the international community will adopt tough sanctions. In other words, he sees the logic of war dominating the region, and this thinking explains his near obsessive efforts to build up the UAE's armed forces.

¶4. (S/NF) MbZ's main message to us during his September visit was that we needed to be better coordinated for Iran contingencies. High level engagement by CENTCOM planners have helped to address this concern, but he believes we have made less progress in addressing what he sees as the slow pace of deliveries of US

security assistance and he is still worried that he does not have enough equipment in place to defend his people when war with Iran breaks out. (And for MbZ it is a matter of when, not if.) We have repeatedly presented to his staff the various explanations for what he perceives as delays, but he remains unconvinced that we are addressing his concerns as a matter of priority.

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## Afghanistan - Pakistan: A Solid Partner

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¶5. (S) Afghanistan: UAE SOF has been quietly deployed as part of OEF since 2003, and the UAE surged its contribution in 2009 adding a combined arms task force. The UAE's UAV capability has been a much appreciated force multiplier. On the economic development side, the UAE has pledged about \$300 M in assistance, and quietly supported the Afghan Reintegration Fund at the recent London Conference. You should thank MbZ for his leadership in being the first Arab country to send troops to Afghanistan.

¶6. (C) Pakistan: the UAE has taken a leading role in the Friends of Pakistan initiative and has provided about \$800 M in assistance in recent years. The Al Nahyan family had a long-standing relationship with former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, and this has transitioned to support for her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, but the UAE stays in touch with all elements on the Pakistani scene, including Musharraf. MbZ will be very interested in your dialogue with General Kayani.

¶7. (S/NF) Threat finance: we have a cooperative relationship with the UAE at the Federal level on addressing Taliban financing. As our information has begun to flow, we have seen increasing activity and interest on the part of UAE authorities. That said, the subject is delicate and operational aspects are best handled through our well established Treasury/Intelligence channel.

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Yemen: Increasing Concern  
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18. (S/NF) MbZ shares our concern about Yemen, and if anything, is more alarmed about the possibility for destabilization of Saudi Arabia. He is convinced that the Iranians are involved in Yemen, and supporting the Houthi rebels. When we tell him that we have no evidence of Iranian support, he is somewhat incredulous, suggesting that our focus on Al Qaeda has caused us to lose sight of the bigger picture of Iranian adventurism. You should encourage him to provide any specific information on Iranian activities to us through intelligence channels.

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Iraq: the Bellwether for Iran  
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19. (S) Iraq: the UAE was the first GCC Country to cancel Saddam era debt and re-establish an embassy, and has generally followed a policy of constructive engagement with the Maliki Government. But MbZ runs hot and cold on Iraq. Sometimes he chooses to emphasize his supportive position; at other times he suggests that Iran has been the big winner in Iraq, and that Southern Iraq will be one of the major flashpoints in the upcoming confrontation with Iran. Anything you can say to reassure him about the US commitment to

Iraqi stability will be helpful.  
OLSON